

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA  
CHAIRMAN**

**before the  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA, THE PACIFIC AND THE  
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT**

**Regional Overview of East Asia and the Pacific**

**March 3, 2010**

Mr. Secretary:

Thank you for joining us today. I appreciate your efforts and those of Secretary Clinton and President Obama in upgrading our relations with the Asia Pacific region. Your collective efforts have delivered demonstrable, positive results. Indeed, with few exceptions, I believe this Administration has done an excellent job in its first year managing relations with this most dynamic region.

For example, despite the challenges posed by China, this Administration has defied the practice of many its predecessors by getting off to a positive start with Beijing. Beijing's relatively mild response to weapons sales to Taiwan and the visit by the Dalai Lama, I believe, reflect a maturation of our ties, partly as a result of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue and other high-level interactions, as well as relative calm in the Taiwan Straits with President Ma's election. However, there is also cause for concern regarding issues ranging from Copenhagen to Google. Yet, I believe the maturation of the U.S.-China relationship also suggests China's own interest in peace and security as the country attempts to maintain internal social stability by meeting the economic, and increasingly, social and political demands of its 1.3 billion citizens. There is no doubt that China's artificially weak currency and the country's position on Iran will pose difficult problems this year. But if both sides hew to "a positive, cooperative and comprehensive U.S.-China relationship," as agreed last year, I believe we can work toward solutions.

Meanwhile, as the Congressional Research Service has noted, "relations between the United States and South Korea... arguably have been at their best state in nearly a decade." Last year's Joint Vision statement provided an important marker in the evolution of the bilateral relationship toward a truly global orientation. On North Korea, our two countries are working as closely as ever, which is critically important in transitioning wartime operational control from the United States to Korea in the near

future. And with Seoul chairing the G-20 this year, the ROK has a vital role to play in supporting international growth and development. That said, I am concerned that if the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement remains in limbo, the effect could become increasingly corrosive. That is why I support the timely passage of KORUS both here and in the National Assembly.

U.S.-Japan ties, a subject this Subcommittee will address specifically in a hearing in two weeks, remain on a solid footing despite a degree of media hyperventilation over basing issues, host nation support and potential changes in Japan's foreign policy. With the Democratic Party of Japan in power for the first time, we need to demonstrate patience – a word you have wisely reiterated in recent weeks. So long as we are guided by our shared interests and our broad, deep and enduring ties, I believe we will find mutually satisfactory answers to basing and other issues.

In Southeast Asia, your team has made important strides in reversing the previous Administration's neglect of the region. Last year's initiation of a long-needed policy change permitting U.S. engagement with Myanmar – which you personally took the lead on – and Secretary Clinton's signing of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation set the stage for enhanced relations with the region. President Obama's participation in the first-ever U.S.-ASEAN summit and his personal links to Indonesia, including his trip there and the full launch of the U.S.-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership later this month, will further bolster our ties. However, I urge you to make continuing human rights abuses in West Papua a priority as we develop the Partnership.

Meanwhile, our alliances with Thailand and the Philippines remain robust, as do our diplomatic, economic and security relations with Singapore and Malaysia. U.S. interactions with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have become increasingly cooperative, and the fact that Vietnam is chairing ASEAN this year offers an effective means of strengthening ties. Our relations with Cambodia have deepened, particularly after last year's lifting of the ban on direct assistance to the Cambodian Government and on Export-Import Bank financing for U.S. companies seeking to do business in Phnom Penh as well as in Laos. As we discussed last week, I strongly advocate forgiving Cambodia's debt in order to improve that country's economy and to address the legacies of war. Toward that end, I also believe we should take a more proactive stance in funding demining operations in Laos and in addressing the tragic effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam.

In addition, I hope we can complement our diplomatic, political and strategic overtures in Southeast Asia with real progress on trade, including on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, on other initiatives with individual Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN as a whole, and ultimately, a Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific.

In the Pacific, the Administration has been on the right track with Secretary Clinton's meeting with Pacific Island leaders during the U.N. General Assembly and, as you noted last week, her commitment to holding such meetings annually. Your having moved forward on an initiative I have pursued for more than a decade – returning USAID

to the Pacific Islands through the \$13 million requested for FY2011 – will have an important, positive effect. So, too, will the President’s planned summit with Pacific Island leaders at the APEC meeting next year in Hawaii.

I look forward to Secretary Clinton’s rescheduled the trip to Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, and – as you mentioned last week – her plans to stop in American Samoa as part of the trip, particularly as you indicated she was slated to do so originally. Following up on our discussions, I have also invited her to stop over as I believe such a stop would support your efforts to strengthen U.S.-Pacific Island relations and American Samoa’s position as a regional leader. It would also give her the chance to thank the thousands of Samoan men and women serving in the U.S. armed forces during a year that will be marked both by rebuilding efforts after the devastating tsunami and by the 110th anniversary of the raising of the U.S. flag. Our people in the services put their lives on the line every day in the most dangerous parts of the world. In fact, in Iraq, we have a higher per capita combat mortality rate than any other U.S. state or territory.

I applaud your work in helping Secretary Clinton meet her objectives to “deepen our historic ties, build new partnerships, work with existing multilateral organizations to pursue shared interests, and reach beyond governments to engage directly with people in every corner” of the Asia Pacific. As she has aptly stated, “America’s future is linked to the future of the Asia-Pacific region; and the future of this region depends on America.”